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Commission on the Status of Women
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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women

Statement submitted by American Psychological Association, Associated Country Women of the World, Global Action on Aging, Gray Panthers, International Council of Jewish Women, International Council of Psychologists, International Federation on Ageing, Simply Help, World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

As we consider "Financing for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women," it is critical to address the threshold issue of identity documentation.

Even when financing is available, there are barriers which may prevent women of all ages from accessing the resources. The particular barrier we are addressing is that of identity documentation (ID). Many programs which provide financing, health benefits, social services, pensions, etc. require documentation of eligibility requirements: citizenship, age, status, and/or relationship. Without such proof a woman is ineligible for the benefits. Inheritance is another area where proof of identity and relationship are requirements.

Identity documentation is required to exercise one's voting rights. Documentation is also required for various government licensing, for example, driver's license, vocational and business licenses.

Furthermore, the lack of documentation is a barrier to mobility, such as for migration and family re-unification. The lack of mobility could hinder a woman's opportunities for employment and family support. Mobility may also be critical in escaping abusive situations.

There are many circumstances that could result in women of all ages being without documentation. Refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons may no longer have their original documents in their possession. Women in societies without formalized documentation systems may have never had documents. Women in war zones or in areas of political or other governmental instability may be unable to acquire or access documents. Women born before their governments developed formal systems may never have been documented.

Therefore, we urge governments to insure that their systems of registration and documentation are adequate. In addition, to address the needs of those currently without documentation, we appeal to governments to develop new or different methods of recognizing identity and eligibility.

We call upon a body within the United Nations to review and identify examples of good working systems and to develop models that states could adapt and adopt.

The entire subject of identity documentation can be considered as a human rights issue. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10 December, 1948), Article 15 #1 states that everyone has the right to a nationality.